



Above: The RCA factory in McDoel Gardens became the largest manufacturing site for the company's production of color televisions. This photo shows the plant soon after RCA acquired the site from Showers Brothers Company. Later alterations to the building substantially modified the period industrial architecture. **Right:** Found along the front porch at 705 W. Dodds, this finely carved limestone panel reflects the personal side of the local limestone industry. The talent and skill of many past residents can be found throughout the neighborhood in the carvings, stone walls and porches.



Pictured (left to right) in front of the Gentry home are family members: Lilly, Frances, Jessie, Katheryn, Emma, and Frances. The large brick Queen Anne was located on the current site of the church parking lot. The surrounding land west of Rogers Street was the farm that also wintered the Gentry Brother's Famous Shows circus.

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The buildings shown here are representative and are not intended to be an exhaustive list of historic resources in the district.

For a comprehensive history on McDoel Gardens, visit www.mcdoelgardens.org



City of Bloomington, Indiana



McDoel Gardens

As other Bloomington neighborhoods were developing during the mid to late 1800's, the area now known as McDoel Gardens consisted primarily of farms dissected by the Dixie Highway (Rogers Street). The Louisville, New Albany and Chicago Railroad formed the eastern boundary and the Illinois Central Railroad spur created the current western boundary (Patterson Street). The Morton Dodd's family farm was on the southern end of the neighborhood. By 1909, when the railroads assumed the name of the Monon Route, a handful of individual homes consisting of around 30 families, were generally located along First, Morton and Rogers Streets.

The Gentry family farm made up the core area of the current neighborhood. It centered around a large brick home on Rogers Street. When Henry B. Gentry's Dog and Pony Show became a hit, the act evolved into the Gentry Brother's Famous Shows. By 1902, the big top circus, which wintered here, was traveling the country in 72 railroad cars. When H.B. Gentry sold his circus in 1916, he was considered by many to be the greatest circus man in America. He died in Bloomington in 1940.

With the coming of the 20th century, the neighborhood began to change dramatically as both industry and housing increased. Limestone mills were established in close proximity to the railroad, eventually totaling eleven mills within three blocks of the modern boundaries of McDoel Gardens. The opening of Henley Stone Company Mill in 1893 was followed by, among others, Bloomington Cut Stone Company Mill (1906); Hoadley Stone Company Mill (1906) built by John W. Hoadley Jr. and; Radley Mill (1907) built by Bloomington-Bedford Stone Company.

During this same time period, the railroad company developed the rail yard just outside the modern southeast boundary of the neighborhood. The Monon switchyard created another source of employment in the neighborhood. In 1910, it was officially named for W. H. McDoel, the influential president of the company from 1899-1909. Improvements at the McDoel Yard, which doubled its capacity, included construction of a new turntable, roundhouse, and coal and water stations. The 1891 Dodds Subdivision, located between Madison and Rogers Streets, was developed with the most prevalent house type of the time, the gabled-ell with either a cross gabled or pyramidal roof shape. Stylistic flourishes were discretionary—some reflected the Queen Anne, Free Classic or Craftsman styles, while others were plain in appearance. The Monon Hotel on South Street (Hillside Drive) also provided accommodations for both railroad employees and travelers.

Another significant event in the development of McDoel Gardens took place in 1919 when Showers Brother's Company purchased 70 acres of the Dodds farm for construction of its new kitchen cabinet factory. The company, headquartered near downtown Bloomington on Morton Street, was at the time the largest furniture manufacturer in the nation. By the late 20's a new manufactured item, the radio, came on the scene and the factory became known as Shower's Radio and Cabinet Factory.

The demand for nearby housing prompted the platting of the Gentry farm into the Dixie Highway Addition in 1923. Over the next decade more than 80 homes were built or moved between Dixie (originally Park Street) and what is now Patterson. Thus the majority of houses in the neighborhood date from this era.

Catalogues homes—particularly popular in the Midwest—supplied a rapidly growing population with affordable housing. In McDoel Gardens, closely spaced lots (48' wide) with deep back yards and minimal setbacks created uniform streets of simple period homes. Predominantly bungalows, the houses create a distinctive rhythm to the street characteristically linked by continuous limestone walls. Exteriors typically exhibit small Arts and Crafts details with a few displaying Colonial Revival and Dutch Colonial influences. Today identification of such homes is not an exact science. Buyers were able to order their home with changes to floor plans, roof lines, porch layouts and decorative details.

The limestone mills began closing in the 1930s. However, in 1940 the Shower's Radio and Cabinet Factory was taken over by Radio Corporation of America. Here the first "Nipper" model radio was assembled and within six months 300,000 more had been completed. The first color television rolled off the assembly line in 1954, paving the way for the plant to become world renowned for its production of color TV's. For the next four decades, the RCA factory anchored the southern end of the neighborhood. Likewise, Bloomington Hospital, founded in 1905 on the north end, continued to grow and expand. Few new houses were constructed in McDoel Gardens following World War II and most of the neighborhood businesses closed. Then with decline of the railroads, economic downturns, shifts in work patterns, and the rise of the global economy, RCA eventually closed. The factory buildings were demolished in 2002 to make way for new development.

In March 2001, the McDoel Gardens Neighborhood Association worked to have a Conservation District ordinance passed. It governs only the demolition, new construction and moving of primary buildings to help slow the rate of housing loss to adjacent commercial and institutional development while allowing maximum freedom to homeowners. The association works continually toward improvements to the visual and physical characteristics of the neighborhood while preserving its history. Today McDoel Gardens is once again thriving as it attracts new homeowners and businesses.

McDoel Gardens walking tour

KEY

- pictured site
- mentioned site

Sites of:

- A - Henley Stone Co. Mill/ South Side Stone Co. Mill
- B - Bowman Mill
- C - Bloomington Cut Stone Co. Mill/ Hoadley Stone Co. Mill B/ Bloomington Mill, Indiana Limestone Co.
- D - Alexander King Stone Co. Mill/ Pagan Stone Co. Mill/ Victor Onlitic Stone Co.
- E - Hoadley-Cline Stone Co. Mill/ Cline Mill, Indiana Limestone Co.
- F - J.H. Nolan & Son Stone Works/ Eakins Planing Mill
- G - Joe Solamito Stone Co. Mill
- H - Hoadley Stone Co. Mill A/ Hoadley Mill, Indiana Limestone Co. Indiana Mill, Indiana Limestone Co.
- I - Tribune Mill/ Hoadley Mill/ Hoadley Mill, Indiana Limestone Co.
- J - Bloomington-Bedford Stone Co. Mill/ Radley Mill, Indiana Limestone Co.
- K - Onlitic Stone Mill/ McDoel Mill, Indiana Limestone Co./ Boonier Stone Co. Mill
- L - Showers Radio and Cabinet Factory/ Radio Corporation of America (RCA)
- M - McDoel Rail Yards Roundhouse



1. McDoel Baptist Church
1006 S. Rogers
c. 1925

The church was founded in 1921 as a Sunday school of the First Baptist Church in downtown. Growth prompted purchase of land at the current site and the original sanctuary was built in 1925 on land of the Gentry family farm. The sanctuary exhibits Tudor Revival style in its use of crenellations, pointed arches, and rusticated limestone that visually anchors the building to the ground. This style was repeated in the 1965 north wing. The brick parsonage at 509 W. Allen (c. 1925) is a double pile house with elements of the Colonial Revival style in its columned portico and broken cornice returns. Influence of the Craftsman era is seen in the paired four over one windows. Note the unusual design of the limestone wall along the sidewalk. Proceeding south along Rogers, note the eras of development between east and west sides of the street; the east side has many pyramidal roof gabled-ells of the early 1900s, while the west side reflects the bungalows and other catalogue homes of the 20s and 30s. Looking across Rogers at the southwest corner, it was here that the Showers Cabinet factory and then the RCA factory were located.



2. 1305 S. Rogers
c. 1905

One of three in a row of pyramidal roof gabled-ells, these homes appeared on maps as early as 1908 and can also be seen in the 1919 photos taken during construction of the Showers Cabinet factory. At 1317 S. Rogers (c. 1915) is an unusual pyramidal roof cottage built as a duplex. At 1409 S. Rogers (c. 1905) is one of the more unaltered examples of a pyramidal roof gabled-ell. Despite the asbestos shingling of the 1940s, it retains its turned posts, porch frieze scrollwork and one over one wood windows indicative of the Queen Anne style.



3. 1421 S. Madison
c. 1927

This bungalow and its neighbor at 1425 S. Madison are likely examples of either the Grant (Sears, Roebuck & Co.) or the Stanhope (Aladdin) erected at the same time. Despite alterations the bungalows from 1417 - 1401 S. Madison (c. 1923) all have similar double front-gable rooflines much like the Ramsay (Sears, Roebuck & Co.). Use of the same catalogue home for this row suggests they were erected on speculation. Looking east from the intersection of Hillside and Madison was the location of the railroad yard and roundhouse.



4. Hedrick House
414 W. Allen
c. 1920

Originally on W. First Street, this front-gabled Craftsman bungalow was moved here in early 2000 by Bloomington Restorations, Inc. when the hospital planned its expansion. Although not positively identified, the house resembles both the Estes (Sears, Roebuck & Co.) and the Castle (Aladdin) in its porch contained under the main roof. Across the street at 415 W. Allen (c. 1923) is a small bungalow with a double front gable roofline similar to many in the neighborhood and most closely resembling the Ramsay (Sears, Roebuck & Co.). It too was moved here by BRI as was the Meadows House at 1020 S. Madison (c.1925). Believed to be the Letona (Sears, Roebuck & Co.), its unusual roofline is a clipped gable, also known as a jerkinhead. All three of these homes were restored and sold as part of BRI's Affordable Housing program.



5. 907 S. Madison
c. 1925

This double front-facing bungalow was originally owned by Naomi Blair. It expresses pure Craftsman style in the unusually extreme taper of the battered wood porch columns, exposed rafter tails and five over one wood windows. Note the limestone walls on either side of the street. On Dodds Street the pattern of similar rooflines is evident despite differences in or alterations to other exterior elements.



6. Fagan Stone Company
315 W. Dodds
c. 1950

Here is the last remnant of the limestone industry in the neighborhood, the administration building of Fagan Stone Company. The smooth block construction and pointed parapet roof reflect the Tudor Revival style similar to the church. Standing at Morton Street the view north and south is a quiet reminder of days of activity. The undeveloped area east of the tracks south of Dodds was the location of the Alexander King Stone Company Mill, later purchased by Fagan Stone Company and then Victor Oolitic Stone Company. Nothing remains except pieces of limestone and concrete building walls. Only a handful of homes line the street but looking south on the west side of Morton is one of the few examples of the American Foursquare (c. 1924) in the neighborhood. A number of businesses and warehouses have since replaced the earlier industries.



7. Henderson House
748 S. Morton
c. 1830

One of the oldest homes in Bloomington, it is associated with Baynard Rush Hall, a founding professor of Indiana Seminary, the precursor of Indiana University. Predating the Louisville, New Albany and Salem Railroad by twenty years, it was in the possession of its namesake, Joseph Henderson, by 1836. Built as a hall and parlor, alteration of the interior stairway in the 1850s configured the home into a five-bay I-house, one of the many variations of this house type. Despite its apparent size, the interior spaces of the home are quite modest due to the 18" thick brick walls. The total square footage is actually less than 1,800. The reconstructed porch reflects later stylistic influences of the Queen Anne era. The rear shed addition houses the kitchen installed in the 1940s.



8. 401 W. Dodds
1926

This house is believed to be the Gordon-Van Tine Home No. 579. Similar in form to the bungalow, this home's style is more representative of the English cottage in its flush eaves, arched porch ceiling and eight over one windows. At 411 W. Dodds (1926) note the paired entry, limestone porch and decorative knee braces of this bungalow. It was originally owned by Millard Axson, a Bloomington police officer, and his wife, Phebe.



9. 503 W. Dodds
1928

An excellent example of the Rodessa (Sears, Roebuck & Co.), this classically styled home retains its original clipped gable and arched portico ceiling. Note the similarity of roof lines that, despite varying alterations over time, contribute to a feel of symmetry and rhythm along the streetscape. Similarity of the homes from 515-607 W. Dodds suggests use of the same catalogue home, perhaps the Ramsay (Sears, Roebuck & Co.), again that were erected on speculation.



10. 602 W. Dodds
1926

The similarity of the row of homes from 602-608 W. Dodds is apparent, as is the dissimilarity between the homes on the north and south sides of the street. On the north side are larger bungalows with pyramidal or side-gabled roofs and front gabled porches, paired windows and more elaborate use of Craftsman detailing. Although the porch has been enclosed, the home at 606 W. Dodds (c.1925) is possibly a large brick example of the Letona or the Manchester (Sears, Roebuck & Co.) Note the clipped gables, dormers and decorative brick coursing along the porch. In the 700 block of W. Dodds are three examples of kit homes: the Farnum (Sears, Roebuck & Co.) at 709 W. Dodds (c.1926), possibly the Tarryton (Sears, Roebuck & Co.) at 712 W. Dodds (c.1928), and either the Rodessa or Solace (Sears, Roebuck & Co.) at 714 W. Dodds (c.1928). Note the patterned sidewalks installed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) of the 1930s.



11. 708 W. Wylie
1927

This double entry bungalow was constructed as a duplex, evidenced by the two families listed in residence in the 1929-30 City Directory. It may be an example of the Honor Built Hampton (Sears, Roebuck & Co.). A mixture of brick and limestone is used along with the wood of the battered columns and bead board ceiling. The house at 710 W. Wylie (1928) is smaller but with similar features and may be the Standard Built Grant (Sears, Roebuck & Co.). Across the street at 707 and 709 W. Wylie (1926) are varying examples of either the Crescent or Ardana (Sears, Roebuck & Co.).



12. 603 W. Wylie
1927

Identified as the Homewood (Sears, Roebuck & Co.), this large house retains its original lines and Craftsman porch details. Proceeding east, an earlier era of house type is seen in the pyramidal roof gabled-ells at 517 and 513 W. Wylie (c.1915).



13. 807 S. Rogers
1928

This small building opened as the Hoadley Motor Company service station. It operated as a service station under various names until finally closing in the late 1950s. Just north at 805 S. Rogers, this building housed a grocery store originally under the name of Talmadge Hawkins, and then later owned for many years by Roy Burns. The Norman Upholstery and Furniture business was also located here. Across the street at 804 S. Rogers (c.1927) is a fine example of a catalogue home resembling the Tarryton (Sears, Roebuck & Co.).



14. The Pope House
908 S. Rogers
1925

The cross-gabbling of this bungalow resembles the Conway (Sears, Roebuck & Co.) or the Pomona (Aladdin). Its high styled exterior of shingling combined with clapboards, side bays and large triple bay windows reflects its more prominent location along Rogers Street. It was first owned by Charles and Nellie Pope. He was employed as a planer at the Tribune Mill. To the south at 910 S. Rogers (c.1923) is an excellent example of either the Grant (Sears, Roebuck & Co.) or Stanhope (Aladdin).



15. 920 S. Rogers
1926

This high style cross-gabled bungalow, situated on what was once part of the Gentry family farm, was first owned by William and Clara May. William was employed as a planer at the Hoadley Mill. Among the home's interesting features are the arched porch lintel leading down to battered columns, and the period limestone garage building facing Dixie. Looking across Rogers at 1003 S. Rogers (c.1926) is an unusual side-gabled bungalow duplex.



16. 504 W. Dixie
c. 1926

This home is an unaltered example of the Crescent (Sears, Roebuck & Co.) showing the porch ceiling which gives it the name. Across the street at 503 W. Dixie (c. 1926) is an example of the Kimball (Sears, Roebuck & Co.) Later development of this street shows changes in rooflines, however, the prominence of the bungalow remains. Different examples include what is possibly the Avalon (Sears, Roebuck & Co.) at 512 W. Dixie (1926), the Kimball (Sears, Roebuck & Co.) at 513 W. Dixie (c.1926), and the Farnum (Sears, Roebuck & Co.) at 515 W. Dixie (c.1924).



17. 710 W. Dixie
1930

This is a finely styled example of either the Grant (Sears, Roebuck & Co.) or Stanhope (Aladdin). Its triple posts above brick columns coupled with its decorative knees braces all speak of the Craftsman era. Next door at 720 W. Dixie (1927) is another example of the Rodessa (Sears, Roebuck & Co.) and at 725 W. Dixie (c.1947) is one of a handful of examples of what may be the Wayne (Sears, Roebuck & Co.) This post World War II home would in general be called a Cape Cod house. It was first owned by Alfred and Essie Brown, proprietors of Printy Café.



18. 607 W. Allen
1930

Believed to be a catalog home, this double pile most closely resembles the Georgia (Aladdin) or the Gordon-Van Tine #532. It's battered wood columns and three over one windows reflect the Craftsman style. Further east at 603 W. Allen (1930) is a narrow front gable home with characteristics of the Finley (Aladdin) or Gordon Van Tine #547 in both its floor plan and width.



Please respect the privacy of the owners by viewing all private buildings from the street.

McDoel Gardens' early history can be seen in this photo—the railroad and limestone mill. Hoadley Stone Company's Mill A was one of eleven limestone mills which formed the heart of the neighborhood. The artery was the railroad linking the mills with each other and the rest of the country.

